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"THE SPIRIT, AND THE BRIDE, SAY COME!"

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MY SAVIOR

AND

MY HOME;

OR,

Voices from the Narrow to the Broad Way.

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come." Rev. xxii. 17.

By REV. A. RITCHIE,

Author of "The Christian's Friend," "First Lessons in Theology," "Matter and Manner for Christian Workers," etc.

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My Savior.

CHAPTER I.

Question. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Cant. v. 9.

Answer. He is a divine being.

THIS is proved, first, by the works attributed to him.

One of the old heathen philosophers was convinced that there was a God when he reflected on the fact that all the men in the world could not make a single fly. He reasoned rightly. God alone can create! And if so, then my Savior is divine, for "by him God made the world." Heb. i. 2. "All things were made by him; and without him was not

any thing made that was made." John i. 3.

More than eighteen hundred years ago, objection was made to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and the question asked, "How are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come?" and certainly, viewing it from the standpoint of human power, the objection is well founded—it requires more than human power to breathe life into a dead body, and more than this is necessary in the work of the resurrection. The scattered dust must be made bone, sinew and flesh, and formed into a shapely body, and then the life given. Who shall say that any thing less than divine power can do this? If not, then the Savior is divine, "for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his

voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

2. It is proved by the perfections ascribed to him.

It needs no argument to prove that a bucket can not contain the ocean; but this is just as reasonable a thing as that a finite being can possess the perfections of the Infinite One. It is plain, therefore, that my Savior is the Infinite One; for the Scriptures declare that "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Col. ii. 9. And he is said to be "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." 1 Cor. i. 24.

3. It is proved by the impossibility of otherwise accounting for his character.

That he did no sin, nor was guile found

in his mouth, that he was holy, harmless and undefiled, is admitted even by his enemies. No defect has yet been found in his character by those who greatly desired to find one, but surely this is altogether inconsistent with his claim (unless that claim is allowed). "All things that the Father hath are mine," "The Father is in me, and I in him," "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." If these claims are not well founded, the Savior was an impostor; if well founded, he was what we claim in his behalf—a divine being. But his bitterest enemies admit that his character was altogether inconsistent with his being an impostor. We hold, therefore, that our argument is conclusive —my Savior is divine.

4. It is proved by the positive testimony of Scripture.

The angels are the highest order of God's intelligent creatures known to men. Several attributes are attributed to them, far surpassing those pertaining to man; *e. g.*, they are said to excel in strength. So strong are they, that a single one is said to have slain one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrian Host in a single night, and another is said to have rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulcher of the Savior, the size of which troubled some of his sorrowing friends. Yet God always addresses them as servants. "And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom." Heb. i. 7, 8. Surely such lan-

guage could only be applied to a divine being. But we have still another passage equally emphatic: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the *Word was God.*" Substitute for the "Word" the angel Gabriel, and see how it would read. "In the beginning was the angel Gabriel, and the angel Gabriel was with God, and the angel Gabriel was God." Such an interpretation is seen at once to be impious and absurd. It remains, therefore, that the *Word* was *God;* very God as he was very man, and dwelt among us. And these are only a few of the testimonies furnished by Scripture to the divinity of the Savior; but we regard these as more than sufficient, and if we have such a Savior, can we doubt that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto

God by him. Can we doubt that he is able to keep the soul committed to his trust, and at last give it an abundant entrance into his kingdom. Can we doubt that he is able to sustain and strengthen and comfort his people through all the days of their earthly pilgrimage, and with his rod and staff comfort them in the valley and shadow of death, and at last enable them to shout with joyful tongue:

"I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." And if so, kind reader, is it any wonder that I should end my answer to the inquiry at the head of this article with the declaration:

"He is the chiefest among ten thousand," and "altogether lovely."

CHAPTER II.

Question. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Cant. v. 9.

Answer. He is a perfect man.

ERE a king to be sent on an embassy by several of his fellows to treat with some Government on matters common to all, he would not thereby lose his royal character; he would only add to it that of embassador. So it was with the Lord Jesus Christ. In coming to earth he did not cease to be God, but added to his Godhead the nature of man, and now we can speak to him as the God-man, or, in answer to our inquiry, reply he is a perfect man! That he was a man, we stop not to prove; that he grew in wisdom and

stature, ate, drank, slept, was weary, etc., like other men, is sufficient to establish that fact. We are concerned at present with the truth of our answer. He was a *perfect* man. And this is proved,

First: By the fact that he was without sin.

We say of a man noted for piety on earth, he is almost perfect. But here we have a personage concerning whom we can say, He was altogether perfect. For more than 1800 years thousands of Satan's emissaries, and among them some of the acutest minds the world has ever seen, have been trying to find a flaw in his character, but in vain. Even to this day the bitterest opposers of his religion admit the fact that "He did no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth."

Secondly: It is proved by his obedience.

He was not merely negatively holy—*i. e.*, without sin—he rendered the obedience which the law required. As briefly stated by an apostle, that law required that men "be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." There are many who may be said to be diligent in business in this day of bustle and enterprise, but have they the fervent spirit? Are they in their business serving the Lord? Here and there one may be found with a fervent spirit—one who can be said "to be very jealous for the Lord of hosts;" but are they fully devoted to the work of the Lord? Has not their devotion so much of selfishness in it that if they were to speak their feelings they could repeat the expression, "Master, we saw one even casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not

us, and we forbade him;" and so much of lassitude that the Master could often say to them, "What! could you not watch with me one hour?" But the Savior obeyed all these injunctions. He was diligent in business; continually he went about doing good to the bodies and the souls of men. So fervent in spirit that he could say concerning the fiery trial—the terrible suffering—that awaited him, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" So obedient that when the work of God the Father required the pouring out of his life's blood he said, "Not my will, but thine be done."

Thirdly: It is proved by the extent of his sympathy.

Selfishness destroys the sympathy of the human soul. The selfish Levite

could pass by the poor, wounded, bleeding man; but the more sympathetic Samaritan bound up his wounds and cared for him. The disciples, weary with the hungry multitude in the wilderness, could say, "Send them away, that they may buy bread;" but the Savior said, "Make them sit on the grass," and then he fed them. So it was with those mothers who brought their children to the Savior. The disciples rebuked them, but he said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Well might the apostle write, "We have not an high priest, which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Our High Priest was touched with our sad condition, and came from heaven to save us. His sympathy has no counterpart in the nature

of sinful man, and, therefore, it is a proof of his perfection.

Fourthly: It is proved by the fullness of his compassion.

The miser shuts his door against the pleading of the poverty-stricken sufferer. His love of gold has expelled compassion from his heart. It is nothing to him that the commandment is, "Love your neighbor as yourself;" or that it is written of God, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." There is no pity in his breast. So it is with every descendant of Adam; some *love*, though it may not be the love of gold, interferes with the fullness of compassion for their suffering fellowmen. The strength of that love will determine the degree of their compassion; but in no case can we say, except in the

case of the Savior, there is fullness of compassion. Not even the loves of heaven prevented his pitying us in our low estate, and yearning with compassion toward us—for us he left its glories, and suffered and died on the accursed tree on Calvary, a sacrifice so great that it far surpasses the experience of the sinful sons of men. Hence this fullness of compassion on the part of Christ proves the perfection of his character. And if he is thus perfect; being sinless, devoted to well-doing, full of sympathy and compassion, such as he alone among the sons of men has exhibited, what other answer could I give to the inquiry at the head of this article than the declaration:

"He is the chiefest among ten thousand," and "altogether lovely."

CHAPTER III.

Question. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Cant. v. 9.

Answer. He is the Redeemer of his people.

ONLY a few years ago, in the southern portion of our land, thousands of men, women and children were annually sold into slavery. It was a sad condition, and the poor slaves felt it, and sung of, and prayed, and hoped for freedom from their task-masters; and inspired with the courage of despair, many of them braved the dangers of the way, the threatenings of their masters and the terrors of wicked laws to escape from their bondage. But there is another bondage into which men rush, and the service is pronounced by them a pleasant work. As the pen

of inspiration describes it, they sell themselves to do iniquity, and stranger still they grasp their chains so tightly, and so devote themselves to their work—the service of sin and Satan—that they forget that it is a bondage. It is this anomaly that made a Redeemer necessary, and *such* a Redeemer as is my Savior, and concerning his work we remark,

First: The price demanded made the work a difficult one.

The law declared, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." It being the demand of a righteous law, justice could not save from the penalty. But difficult as the task was, my Savior met its requirement. Hence these records—precious to the sin-troubled soul—"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity;" "Feed the Church of God,

which he has purchased with his own blood;" "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, ... but with the precious blood of Christ."

Secondly: No one else could pay the price demanded.

The cattle on a thousand hills are not of value sufficient to redeem a soul. Its Creator asserts that it is worth more than the entire world, and it is just as true that no man can redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for his soul. So far from having this ability, all are involved in the same ruin, and equally need a Redeemer, with the single exception of my Savior, who came into the world, not by ordinary generation, but in a way described as "the mystery of Godliness"—through God he manifested himself in the flesh—thus putting himself under the

law that he might redeem them that are under the law, and procure for them the adoption of sons. Thus he alone, of all the sons of men, had power to redeem, and in consequence of this there is no discordant voice around the throne in heaven when the song is sung, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Oh, that our world's population had their voices attuned to sing the same song on earth. It was a noble saying of the Armenian queen to her husband, who had offered his life for her ransom: "I really did not observe Cyrus, my mind was so occupied with the man who offered to give his life for my ransom that I could think of no other;" and this same policy of admiring gratitude does, and should, fill the Christian's heart for his Savior, and prompts him to answer the question,

"What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" with the declaration:

"My beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand," and "altogether lovely."

CHAPTER IV.

Question. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Cant. v. 9.

Answer. He is the Advocate of his people.

WE are criminals, condemned for the violation of God's holy law, and need an Advocate to secure our pardon. Indeed, Satan himself, who tempted our first parents, and is still engaged in the nefarious work of tempting their posterity, is an "accuser of the brethren." There is truth in the vision which Zechariah saw, viz: Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand, to resist or accuse him. And, worse than all, the accusation is just. We have sinned against God, and deserve the

wrath and curse of the broken law. Aye, more, the sentence of condemnation has been pronounced against us: "He that believeth not in the only begotten Son of God is condemned already." But we are not without hope. There is an Advocate able to secure a pardon. Blessed truth: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with God the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." There is only one Advocate in the court of heaven. No one but Jesus Christ the righteous is permitted or qualified to plead there; but his word is always heard. "Him the Father heareth always." His plea is always successful. He can point to the wounds in his side, the mark of the nails in his hand, and ask, not for the sake of his clients, but for his own sake, that they may be pardoned, and the case is never doubtful.

He can say, "I will that they be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

True, he can not deny the justice of the charge brought against them, but he can say: I was wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities: the chastisement of their peace was upon me; and with my stripes they are healed. Isa. liii. 5.

How different from earthly advocates! Many of them often plead with eloquent tongue in behalf of their clients, but none have ever paid the penalty due their transgression, that their clients might be saved from it. Much less have any of them chosen it as their work to secure pardon for the poor condemned transgressor. But our Advocate chose this work, and was specially set apart to it.

Hence his designation, "Jesus" — a Savior. "He shall save his people from their sins." And not only from the defilement of their sin, but also from the penalty of their sin. And so he not only poured out his soul unto death to satisfy the demands of justice, and thus maintain the honor of God's holy law; but he is ever ready to intercede at the right hand of God, that the transgressor may be pardoned, accepted and saved. Blessed work! And he is so fully committed to it that it can be said, "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Heb. vii. 25. And so his trusting people can sing:

"Jesus, my great High Priest,
Offered his blood, and died;
My guilty conscience seeks
No sacrifice beside—
His powerful blood did once atone,
And now *it pleads before the throne*."

Is it any wonder that when the question is asked, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" the response comes back from his clients: My Savior is the Advocate of his people — "*The chiefest among ten thousand,*" *and* "*altogether lovely?*"

CHAPTER V.

Question. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Cant. v. 9.

Answer. He is the Teacher of his people.

ALL mankind are sufferers because of their ignorance. They are described by an apostle, as those "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Just as the savage would throw away a diamond as readily as a piece of glass, because ignorant of its value; so we in our ignorance have rejected the "Life of God," which fills the soul with peace, joy and hope. But this ignorance can be removed by the Savior. In him dwell treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and he can open

our eyes to see and our minds to receive the truth. Indeed, we can not see him aright and not behold the character of God beaming in his countenance. This was the experience of the Apostle Paul; hence his declaration, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God *in the face of Jesus Christ.*" So true it is that he is the Teacher of his people.

He teaches them in various ways:

1. He reveals to them the will of God. "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you," is his own declaration; as also, "I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness." And how fully the history of the world corroborates the

truth of these declarations is well known. Where the light of the blessed Savior has shined, the darkness of heathenism has been dispelled, and the world has rejoiced in the light of the arts and the sciences, and in the enjoyment of civil and religious freedom. On the contrary, where that light has never shined, darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people, and these "dark places of the earth are the habitations of cruelty."

2. He teaches them by the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit.

By this influence he opens the blind eyes to perceive the truth, so that his people see wondrous things in God's law. Aye, that law which they once in their ignorance hated is now so seen by them that they can say, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than

honey to my mouth." Yes, and the Savior who appeared to them as a root out of a dry ground, without form and comeliness, now is seen by them as the "Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" and so deep is the impression made upon their hearts by his glory and his beauty, that whatever other knowledge may be effaced this forever remains. When Bishop Beveridge was dying, one of his intimate friends asked him if he knew him, but he had forgotten the formerly well-known countenance. His wife then asked him if he knew her; but she, too, had faded from his memory. Some one then asked, Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? To which he replied, "Jesus Christ? O yes! I have known him for forty years—precious Savior! he is my only hope." And

this is the experience of his people in every age—his beauty, his glory and his power can not be effaced from their memory. They can always sing:

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."

Hence, if we ask the question at the head of this article, they are ready to respond, "My Savior is the Teacher of his people; 'the chiefest among ten thousand,' and 'altogether lovely.'"

CHAPTER VI.

Question. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Cant. v. 9.

Answer. He is the Comforter of his people.

SAID an old writer: "There are many sons of sorrow!" Aye, every one of the descendants of Adam belongs to this class. But there is only one truly entitled to the designation, "Son of consolation;" only one concerning whom it can be truly said, "Thy comforts delight my soul;" but that one is the "Blessed Savior." And he is fully qualified to minister comfort to sorrow-stricken hearts; for he was himself a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and it was predicted of him that "He would not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking

flax;" but, on the contrary, that he would "bind up the broken-hearted," and "appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." And the experience of God's people in all ages agrees with Rutherford, that it is a desirable thing to be sick, because it brings the Savior to the bedside; or, as another expresses it: "The bitterness of sorrow is worth enduring, to have his promised consolations." It is most true that as our afflictions abound, so do his consolations. Friends on earth can not always reach the source of our sorrow. Like Job's comforters, they can only stand in silence before the deeply stricken, but they may not be able to remove the sorrow. But this is not the case with the

Lord Jesus Christ. There is no sorrow too great for him to remove. If the burden of sin is pressing upon the heart of some poor sinner, and, like Bunyan, driving him to despair, he can whisper to his heart by the Holy Spirit, "My grace is sufficient for you," and light and joy will fill the troubled soul.

If some crushing temporal sorrow is pressing its heavy weight upon some of his people, like Job, he enables them to say "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." If some bodily affliction has fallen to the lot of his followers, and they are called to endure imprisonment and death, he can, as in the case of Paul and Silas, enable them to sing songs in their prison-house, and, like the Scottish martyr, to rejoice that in a few hours he could lay

his head on the block, and thus so soon reach his Savior; or, like the boy-martyr of Asia, enable them to say, "Weep not; you should rather rejoice; you know not what a city I am going to."

Yes, troubled soul, whatever may be the nature of your sorrow, the Savior can so pour in the oil of consolation that you will remember it no more, but be enabled to say with a sufferer long since in glory: "We glory also in tribulations." And with such an experience, is it to be wondered at that the reply is heard to the question, What is thy beloved? etc., He is the Comforter of his people?

CHAPTER VII.

Question. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Cant. v. 9.

Answer. He is the Protector of his people.

HERE, in this sin-stricken world, the people of God are tempest-tossed. They are exposed to suffering and death itself. Troubled on every side, but they are not distressed; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but they are not destroyed—for they have an Almighty Protector, and he has given them his promise: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

And how well he has fulfilled this promise the history of his people shows. If we apply it to temporal blessings, then we have the Psalmist's declaration: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Just as he saved the Jews in Persia by taking away sleep from the eyes of King Ahasuerus, and turning his thoughts to the chronicles of the kingdom, so in a thousand ways and times he has made his people experience the truth of his promise: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand."

Daniel had the decree of the king and the nobles of the Persian Empire against

him, and was cast into the den of lions; but even there the Savior's strong arm could reach and protect him. The three children were cast into a seven times heated furnace, and the flames leaped on the strong men selected to cast them in and destroyed them; but the arm of their Protector could reach them even there, and it did, and not a hair of their head was singed. The promise was literally fulfilled: "The flames shall not kindle upon thee."

And if we apply the promise to spiritual blessings, we have still more abundant illustrations of the faithfulness of the Promiser. Satan, the enemy of souls, was lying in wait for poor Peter, but he did not escape the watchful eye of the "Keeper of Israel," and it instantly brought the interceding Savior to his aid.

"I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," and Peter was safe. And in the same way he saves his people still. The enemy of their souls may rise up to accuse them, but instantly their Savior appears in their behalf, and the voice is heard: "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan! even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" And the opposer ceases his opposition and slinks away. That voice which could have brought instantly legions of angels to his side on earth, if he had chosen to call them, is always efficient to deliver those for whom it is used on the throne of his glory. And, indeed, so confident do his people feel regarding the ability of the Savior to protect them that they are frequently heard at the end of their

journey declaring in the words of the apostle: "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to his trust against that day." In view of such facts, is it any wonder that they reply to the inquiry, What is thy beloved more than another beloved? He is the Protector of his people; "The chiefest among ten thousand," and "altogether lovely?"

CHAPTER VIII.

Question. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Cant. v. 9.

Answer. He is the Sanctifier of his people.

WHAT Christian has not put up oftentimes the prayer of the Psalmist, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin?" It is said that Cranmer, when led to the stake which was to consume his body, thrust his right hand into the fire, because it had signed a recantation. This is the way the Christian often feels; as the Prophet expresses it, "He loathes himself in his own sight for his sins and his iniquities." Just as they make progress heavenward, and have the light of God's countenance shining upon them, in the

same degree do they see and feel sin to be exceeding sinful, and long to be free from its power. Often do they speak, as Paul did, of the law in their members warring against the law of their mind, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin and death; and so oppressed do they sometimes feel by its power, that they are heard to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" They can sympathize with the plaint of an old Christian when he said: "O sin, thou hast cursed us; thou hast thrown up a barrier between ourselves and God. With thy chilling breath thou hast extinguished the light of our household joys; thou hast unstrung our hopes and filled the air with discordant cries; thou hast unsheathed the sword, and bathed it in human blood; thou hast dug every

grave in the bosom of the fair earth; but for thee we should not have known the name of widow or orphan, tear and sigh, sorrow and death." But they are not without hope. Here is a precious promise of our Savior: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you."

The struggle against sin will have an end. There is a heaven of holiness for the redeemed of the Lord, and when they think of it, they often burst forth in the exclamation: "Oh, it is a heaven worth dying for, to be free from sin!" They long to be there, where they can sing, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood;" and even now, when they meditate on this glorious theme, they are so filled with gratitude,

that if any one asks them the question, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" they will at once reply, "He is the Sanctifier of his people; 'the chiefest among ten thousand,' and 'altogether lovely.'"

CHAPTER IX.

Question. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Cant. v. 9.

Answer. He is the Rewarder of his people.

WHAT wonderful things have been accomplished by men stimulated by the hope of reward! Sometimes it was the hope of wealth, at another time fame, and at another position or power. Worthless objects, and probably often sought with unworthy motives; but, nevertheless, efficient in animating men to deeds of daring, if not of heroism, to secure them.

There are, however, rewards which it is proper to seek, and such a thing as seeking them with right motives. Hence, it is written concerning the Savior: "Who

for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." The hope of a proper reward is, therefore, a proper impelling force; and, if so, Christians may well devote themselves with diligence to the work of the Lord; for their Savior is the Rewarder of his people.

It is said that Dionysius the tyrant ordered certain musicians to play before him, with the promise of large rewards, but when they asked their reward, he told them the hope of receiving it which they had enjoyed was itself sufficient reward; but this is not the way my Savior rewards his people. When assembled before him to receive their hoped-for reward, he will say to them: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Their hope will

never be disappointed. It was Peter's confidence that, when the great Shepherd should appear, we "shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Not an earthly crown, which might slip from our grasp in a few days or years, but one that would forever abide.

Here the people of God may often go with sad countenance and a mourning heart, but by and by they shall hear the voice of their Savior say: "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord." Here they may be called to endure and suffer scourgings, bonds, imprisonment, and even death, but it is only that they may experience the truth of that blessed declaration: "Our light affliction, which is for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Aye, more than that—they remember that he

has said: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." No wonder when they meditate on these precious promises, that they can return no other answer to the inquiry, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" but the word: "He is the Rewarder of his people; 'the chiefest among ten thousand,' and 'altogether lovely.'"

My Home.

My Home.

CHAPTER I.

ITS EXTENT AND BEAUTY.

"For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. xi. 10.

YES, dear friend, I may appear to you poor, helpless and forsaken; but then you must know that I am here only a pilgrim and a stranger (Heb. xi. 13), passing through to my inheritance and my home. I may seem to you a beggar clothed in rags, but in reality I am a King's son (1 Cor. vi. 18) and heir of a crown that fadeth not away. 1 Pet. v. 4. True, while here I am needy and dependent, and daily have to cry:

"Dear Jesus, lead me by the hand,
Through this sin-struck, desert land—
To my kingdom and the home
Thou hast purchased for thine *own*."

But by and by I shall in safety stand accepted before my Father, and receive from his hand my crown. 2 Tim. iv. 8.

And inasmuch as this glorious inheritance may also be yours (John i. 12), I desire to tell you all that I know about it, that you may be incited to seek to obtain it. And first, let me tell you of its

EXTENT AND BEAUTY.

It is not a small territory, where only a few can reside and find congenial employment, or where, after a few days' survey, no new beauty can delight the eye. On the contrary, we know that there, myriads of angels and myriads of the redeemed find room to live and labor in the

service of their divine Creator; yes, and room for enjoyment too, for at God's right hand there is "fullness of joy." As the Savior declares, it is a house with "many mansions;" and John saw in vision (Rev. xxi.) that it was a city measuring twelve thousand furlongs broad, wide, and high. And although we are not to understand this description as literal, yet it was intended to impress on our minds the great extent of the city of God. What the servant said to the master of the feast, in the parable of the Great Supper, is indeed true of heaven: "Yet there is room."

Nor does it lack in elements of beauty. In the vision already alluded to, we are told that "the building of the wall of it was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations

of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones . . . . and the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

These are, of course, figures, but intended, if they have any meaning at all, to impress upon our minds the exceeding beauty of the Heavenly Jerusalem. We do not wonder that the Psalmist urged pilgrims heavenward to "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, that ye may tell it to the generation following." Ps. xlviii. 12, 13. Nor do we wonder that Christian poets have sung of it in words like the following:

"Thy Father's house, thine own bright home,
And thou hast there a place for me;

Though yet an exile here I roam,
That distant home by faith I see.
I see its domes resplendent glow,
Where beams of God's own glory fall,
And trees of life immortal grow,
Whose fruits o'erhang the sapphire wall."

Yes, God did not implant the ability to appreciate and enjoy the beautiful in our natures without providing for its exercise. Even here in this sin-stricken world how many scenes of beauty delight the eye!—much more may we expect to see beauty in the sin-unclouded kingdom above. Here we see through a glass darkly, but by and by we shall see and know what is the hope of our calling, and what are the riches and glory of our inheritance. Eph. i. 18.

Dear friend, do you not wish to become an heir of this glorious inheritance? If so, let me whisper in your ear: "To as

many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." And if sons, then heirs—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

CHAPTER II.

ITS SECURITY AND STABILITY.

"No lion shall be there." Isa. xxxv. 9. "An inheritance incorruptible." 1 Pet. i. 4.

WHERE lions run at large, there is danger — life is insecure. When possessions are corruptible, they soon fade away, and that once so highly valued becomes a worthless thing. But this is not the case with the "inheritance above." There are no lion and no corruption there. How different from earthly possessions! These often appear pleasant, safe and secure to the eye, but when the traveler passes over them, he finds them full of snares and pitfalls. And though its foundations may appear as if built on a rock, yet they are all transient.

Gourds of beauty and of comfort often grow up in a night, but just as often they vanish in a night, and leave their former possessor to say with the wise man: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And this is just what we might expect in a sin-stricken world. Like a worm at the root of a tree, withering its leaves, rotting its branches, and making them liable to fall and crush the passer-by, sin has blighted and rotted, and written insecurity on all the possessions of earth.

It is said that when Phocus built a strong wall around his palace for his own security, in the night-time he heard a voice crying: "O Emperor, though thou build thy wall as high as the clouds, yet if sin be within it, it will overthrow all." Yes, wherever sin is, there wasting and destruction are written. Hence, we are

not astonished that God says to his people: "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." As Rutherford used to say, "The forests are given to the fire, and it is not wise to build nests in them." Hence the fact that in every age God's children have confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth, and that they sought a better country, even an heavenly. They know that once there, they would be beyond danger —perfect security would be their lot, for "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there." They know, too, that once in possession of this blessed inheritance, it would not perish with the using; for it is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away."

Yes, it is most true that "my inheritance" is not only large in extent and very beautiful, it is also secure and stable; and so, while it has cost me many a struggle to obtain it—"for the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force;" yes, struggles with Satan when I began to feel my need of a Savior, and struggles with the law when it began as a schoolmaster to bring me to Christ—but I feel persuaded that one day's possession of this inheritance will more than repay for all the cross-bearing and the conflict that have been mine. And so, fellow-sinner, I want you to join me in my journey to "my inheritance." It is the only possession worth making an effort to obtain; for it is the only one on which we can write, secure and stable. Hence, the pilgrims sing:

"Earth, sin-stricken, is dreary,
And full of woe and blight;
But heaven has life and safety,
And skies forever bright.

"Earth and all its grandeur flies,
It food for fire shall be;
Heaven in lasting beauty shines
Throughout eternity."

CHAPTER III.

ITS HAPPINESS.

"The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Isa. xxxiii. 24.

SIN and its consequent sorrow are everywhere found on earth. Here every inhabitant can say, "I am sick," and just because all the dwellers have committed iniquity; but their sinfulness and their suffering are not adapted to their original nature, hence the unrest which accompanies it. They were created for enjoyment. It is most true that "Man's chief end is to glorify God and *enjoy him forever.*" And this being the end for which he was created, just as certain as the needle turns to the pole, so

does man seek happiness. True, he often mistakes in the objects where he expects to find it—he often seeks it in wealth, in places of honor or power among his fellow-men, or in the applause of the multitude, and just as often he finds that it is not there. No! "Happiness is not here" is written on everything pertaining to earth.

A thousand worldly objects promise happiness, and many have been allured by their various voices to seek after them in order that they might find it; but the result is, the bubble burst in their grasp, or the beautiful rose pierced the hand that would pluck it with its thorns, and "vanity of vanities, all is vanity," is universally found to be the proper verdict for the possessions of earth. But the happiness of heaven, the inheritance of

the saints, is real, satisfying and enduring.

It is real. Hence such declarations as the following: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and that they may enter in through the gates into the city." Hence, also, the fullness of the figures used to describe the happiness of this glorious inheritance. It is called a *paradise, a kingdom, a crown of glory, a Father's house, mansions, a better country, a rest;* and, as if language were impotent to describe its beauty and bliss, it is said: "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love him." Most true it is that there are no bubbles and no thorns in the inheritance above.

It is also *satisfying*. It is the very kind of pleasure we were created to enjoy; hence, it does not pall upon the taste, nor does conscience upbraid when we enjoy it, and, more than this, the measure is equal to our desire—there is not only joy, but *fullness* of joy, in the presence of God. There is no sin there, and, as a consequence, the rose is without a thorn, music without a discord, summer without winter, and day without night. Its pleasures never satiate.

They are also *enduring*. The pleasures of earth, like its riches, take to themselves wings and fly away. They are ours but for a day; but it is not so with the happiness of heaven. At God's right hand there are not only pleasures, but *pleasures forevermore*. It is declared to be part of the work of our divine Mediator

to secure to the saints the *eternal* inheritance. Heb. ix. 15. So that once in possession, there will be no trouble about insecure deeds or lawsuits to eject the possessors—it will be ours forever. No wonder that travelers thitherward sing as they journey on:

"Heaven is the land where troubles cease,
Where toils and tears are o'er;
The blissful clime of rest and peace,
Where cares distract no more.
And not the shadow of distress
Dims its unsullied blessedness.

"Heaven is the dwelling-place of joy,
The home of light and love;
Where faith and hope in rapture die,
And ransomed souls above
Enjoy before the eternal throne
Bliss everlasting and unknown."

Reader, will you join the blessed company of those traveling to this place of everlasting blessedness?

CHAPTER IV.

ITS REST.

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." Heb. iv. 9.

THIS earth is a place of labor and toil. Thousands of years ago the sentence was pronounced: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread;" and the world's history shows that from that very day limbs have been on the rack, fingers playing, feet plodding, loins aching, brows sweating, brains drooping, hearts breaking, and minds hoping, fearing and wearily planning. But though this is the law and the fact in this sin-stricken planet, I am not discouraged; for this is not my home. Here I have no abiding place and no lasting possession; my inheritance is

above, and there there remains a rest to all God's people, and I want to tell you something about that glorious rest.

1st. *It is a rest at home.*—In our days of sickness here, we have often had the opportunity of seeking rest for our weary, feverish head on a hospital bed; but no kind, sympathizing hand smoothed our pillow, or bathed our aching temples, or cheered us by hopeful words, and so we turned restlessly on the bed, in the evening saying: "Would God it were morning!" and in the morning, "Would God it were evening!" and all the time thinking if we were only at home, surrounded by loving friends, then we could rest; but it was only a hospital—how could I rest? Now, heaven is not a hospital, fitted up for the use of those who have been sorely wounded in the battle-field of life

—it is our Father's house, and there we rest at home; for God has said: "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And so, as we journey thither, we can sing:

"In the Christian's home in glory,
There remains a land of rest;
There my Savior's gone before me,
To fulfill my soul's request.
There is rest for the weary,
There is rest for you;
In the sweet fields of Eden,
Where the tree of life is blooming,
There is rest for you."

There, weary workers, you will not have to toil under a burning sun: "For the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Labor and toil are

words unknown in heaven, but rest is a familiar sound.

2d. *It is a rest forever.*—The limited rest we have on earth is often fitful, and often broken by the knowledge that to-morrow the conflict must begin again. The soldier after his weary march may be so tired that he can lie down and rest on the cold ground. He needs no downy pillow on which to court repose; but, even in his case, dreams of the bugle sounding for to-morrow's carnage interrupt his slumber and steal away his rest. But in the home above there are no more battles to fight. Here the last battle is fought and the victory won. There the palm is carried and the crown of victory worn, and rest forever enjoyed, and nevermore will be seen the banner of the enemy daring us to the combat, and our

song shall be: "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Dear reader, we want you to enjoy this rest. There is no other worth having—no other abiding—and you can have it. Hear the Savior's own invitation: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest.*" Accept this offer—then, whatever may be your daily toils and trials, at evening-time you can sing:

"One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er—
I'm nearer home to-day
Than e'er I've been before—
Nearer my Father's throne,
Nearer my *rest at home.*"

CHAPTER V.

ITS ENJOYMENT.

"In thy presence there is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." Ps. xvi. 11.

AN old writer has well said: "Fullness of joy can not be obtained here; for no earthly pleasure is sufficient to fill the soul's capacity." And this is most true; for the soul was made to enjoy God, and nothing less will fully satisfy its cravings.

Men often deceive themselves, imagining that they can have enjoyment in the possession of this and that other earthly good; but it is no sooner obtained than they find that, like a bubble, it has collapsed in their grasp, and the soul re-

mains still unsatisfied, so true it is that nowhere now, but in the home above, is there fullness of joy. In what this joy consists we can not now fully know; but here and there in the "Will of God," by which he makes over this glorious inheritance to his people, we have hints suggesting the blessedness of the inhabitants of heaven. We notice the characteristics suggested by a few of them.

1st. *Heaven's inhabitants will be free from sin.*—Over its pearly gates are written: "Nothing unclean shall enter;" "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Here sin is a burden, and we might say, "The troubler of God's people." They often complain, "There is a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin and death,"

and they sigh to be free from its power. Aye, even with a despairing heart they often cry, "Who shall deliver me?" And the thought that they will be free from this serpent's trail, and no longer subject to its poisoning influence, makes them oftentimes burst forth in the exclamation: "Oh, it is a heaven worth dying for to be free from sin!"

2d. *There is no sorrow there.*—As one of the old writers quaintly said: "God had one Son without sin, but no son without sorrow." The first human spirit that ever ascended from our earth to heaven went from a body mangled by his brother Cain's murderous hand, and every succeeding one has been able to testify that the law is still in force: "Through much tribulation ye shall enter the kingdom." There is not a single pilgrim that has

ever traveled heavenward but who has bedewed his path with tears, and no human hand can dry them. Sin and sorrow are linked together by the law of God; but when the inheritance above is reached, "God will wipe the tear from every eye." "Sin, sorrow and suffering shall forever flee away."

3d. *The society in heaven will be congenial.*—From whatever portion of the world they come, and no matter what their nationality may be, they will sit down in the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Matt. viii. 11), and enjoy sweet communion. Here the people of God can sometimes sing: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." Their hearts are also sometimes knit together, as were those of David and Jonathan; and yet

they at other times differ in their vision, and withstand each other to the face, as Paul did Peter. Then, too, they see defects in each other's character, and it mars their enjoyment and greatly interrupts their communion with each other. But in the home above these defects of vision and character are all cured; they see and know as they are seen and known. And, above all, they will enjoy the presence of their blessed Master, and that itself will make heaven a delightsome place. That constituted its attraction for the Apostle Paul: "I have a desire to depart and be *with Christ,* which is far better." And not only will we be with him, but we will be like him: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall

be like him; for we shall see him as he is." 1 John iii. 2.

4th. *Every desire of our nature will be gratified.*—Here our desires crave wrong things, and they ought not to be gratified. Here they often desire right things, but they can not be obtained. But in the home above this will never occur; for all our desires will be holy, and there will always be the means of gratifying them. Hence our text does not say merely there is joy above, but *fullness* of joy. Nothing will be lacking! A complete joy as the result of complete redemption from sin will be the portion of the saints. Here we have joys drop by drop—just enough to keep us from fainting as we journey onward—but there we will experience the fulfillment of the declaration: "Thou shalt make them drink of

the river of thy pleasure." Ps. xxxvi. 8. Here a single drop out of this river has made the weary soul rejoice with joy unspeakable, aye, in the midst of tribulation even; and, if so, how much better will it be to drink out of the river! No wonder that pilgrims often sing:

"We speak of the realms of the blest,
Of that country so bright and so fair;
And oft are its glories confessed—
But what must it be to be there?

"We speak of its pathway of gold,
Of its walks deck'd with jewels so rare,
Of its wonders and treasures untold—
But what must it be to be there?"

Reader! Is not this inheritance worth your acceptance? If so, become a son, and then you will be an heir of its glory and its bliss! And this can be done by accepting the offered Savior. "To as

many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John i. 12.

CHAPTER VI.

ITS PEACE.

"He shall enter into peace." Isa. lvii. 2.

N old book declares that there is no peace to the wicked, but that they are like the troubled sea that can not rest, and the history of the world proves its truth. It is most true they not only lack the enjoyment of peace, but like the troubled sea they are tossed and lashed even to fury. It is no uncommon thing, in this sin-stricken world, to find tempest-tossed souls in deep anxiety asking, "where shall I find rest?" But in heaven all is peace. There is no troubled and tempest-tossed sea there; but as if to prefigure the peace of all heaven's dwellers, there is said to be there a sea of glass

"like unto crystal," and our text declares that when the righteous die, they "enter into peace." Yes, there is peace in the home above, a peace which the world can not give, and which the world can not take away, a peace which surpasseth all understanding, and which keeps the mind and heart. It is a peace with God.

The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not, and can not be, subject to the law, and the result is a perpetual warfare —a continual rising up of the affections against God. And even in the case of those who have been reconciled to God, their carnal nature not being fully sanctified, there is still in some degree a lack of peace. With sin in their hearts there is distrust, and they can not claim the promise: "Thou wilt keep them in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee."

But in heaven there are both perfect trust and perfect peace with God, because the victory over sin has been obtained by all its redeemed inhabitants. Then there is peace of conscience.

The Apostle Paul knew the value of this blessing, when he said, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have a conscience void of offense both toward God and toward men." To have a friend to accuse us of misconduct will rob us of peace, and possibly cause restlessness and sorrow; how much more when our own conscience rises up and whispers, You are guilty. The old fable of the ring that contracted on the finger when the hand was engaged in a wicked act, is true of conscience, and there is no way of getting it at ease again, but by sprinkling it with the blood of the Redeemer.

But all who enter the home above have been thus sprinkled from an evil conscience, and so they have this peace.

Then we have peace with our associates. Here, like David, we have to mourn that the friend in whom we trusted, and with whom we took sweet counsel in the house of God, has turned against us; or it may be our experience is like the Savior himself: we are betrayed by one who was accustomed to sit at the table with us. Ah, the five enemies of peace flourish here and cut oftentimes the best-cemented friendships, viz: avarice, ambition, envy, anger and pride; but they are unknown in heaven, and the peace which reigns there is forever unbroken.

Then, too, there is the peace of security.

Peace, says a late writer, "is love re-

posing." But though we may have love on earth, yet little repose for it. Here,

> "The cross must be borne,
> That the crown may be worn."

But the victory being won peace reigns in heaven—a peace, too, that will forever be unbroken, for our foes are not merely routed—they are shut up in an eternal prison-house, and so the peace of security fills the hearts of those who once expressed their varied experience thus: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

Troubled, tempest-tossed soul, do you not desire to obtain this blessed peace? If you do, listen to the precious promise: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER VII.

ITS HOLINESS.

"God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness." Ps. xlvii. 8.

A LITTLE child, being afraid to enter a strange house, "because," she saw "there was nobody but grown men inside," asked if there was a mother there, and when she was told, "Yes, there is a mother here," she was afraid no longer. She felt instinctively that a mother would take care of her. So may we dismiss all fears respecting our safety and our happiness in heaven, when we remember that "God's throne of holiness is there." A holy place must be a safe and a happy place. And not only so, but there can be no true happiness

and no real safety where holiness does not reign supreme.

Let us visit some portion of our globe where the moralizing and sanctifying influences of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ have not yet penetrated, and what do we find? An illustration of the apostolic maxim: "Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse!" and a place of horrid cruelty, just the very opposite of what we conceive heaven to be—no holiness, and consequently no happiness and no safety. And still further: Seek out some community educated and refined, where philosophy, science, poetry and literature flourish, but where the inhabitants know nothing of the transforming power of the religion of Christ, and you will find frivolity, intrigue, envy, etc., abounding in their midst; and, just as

in the preceding case, without holiness their education and refinement will not furnish them either permanent safety or present happiness.

And, if these are facts, heaven must have attractions, because it is a place of holiness — because God's throne is a throne of holiness.

Besides this, we can appeal to your own experience, fellow-sinner! When do you feel the happiest and the safest? Is it when you have been indulging in the frivolities and sinful pleasures of earth, or when you have engaged in some work of benevolence, commended by your conscience and required by the precepts of Christianity? We know your answer, and it corresponds with Christian experience.

A careless, reckless sinner was arrested,

just as was persecuting Saul, in the midst of his career of wickedness, and made a subject of the saving grace of the divine Redeemer. One of his old associates met him one day, and said to him: "I hear you have given up your pleasures," to which he replied: "Oh, no! I never knew what true pleasure was until now." He had only given up its counterfeit for the reality. And if you ask them how they feel about their safety, they at once reply: "If I look to sinful self, I am without hope, but when I look to the blood that cleanseth from all sin, then I can rejoice with confidence." Yes, in holiness there are both happiness and safety. Some one has said, that as all the primary colors coalesce to make pure white, so all the graces of the Spirit unite to produce holiness; and we would

add, as every one of these graces tends to save and make happy the human family, so all combined in holiness, they render their subjects perfectly safe and happy. And, since in the home above all are holy, so all are safe and happy. Yes, pilgrims journeying on the way can sing:

"Sweet the home the saints inherit—
The place of holiness and rest;
Soon shall we taste its blessed joys,
And reach its safety and be blest."

Homeless wanderers in this sin-stricken wilderness world, do you not desire to obtain this — the home of holiness, and therefore of safety and happiness? Then listen to the blessed declaration: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

CHAPTER VIII.

ITS SOCIETY.

"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Heb. xii. 22–24.

"OH, if I had only moral courage enough to break away from my companions, for they are dragging me to ruin!" said a young man, a few days ago; and, in thus speaking, he expressed a well-known truth, viz: that our character and happiness depend very much on those with whom we are associated.

And this is true in our religious associ-

ations as well as in the daily affairs of life. Hence the Psalmist's experience: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord," and his sad complaint that not an enemy, but his equal, his guide and his acquaintance, had turned against him; showing that both joy and sorrow came to him in consequence of the conduct of his associates. Ah! how often do the friendships and the associations of earth furnish such examples—filling their subjects with sorrow, and condemning them to days and nights of suffering; and when the iron has entered their soul, they leave them to meditate on the truth of the declaration: "Evil communications corrupt good manners."

But in the dwelling-place above there are no corrupting associations and no

broken friendships. The society there are incapable of any hurtful action. They are, as our text teaches, angels, an innumerable company; the redeemed of the Lord—those who had while yet on earth their names written in heaven; the spirits of just men made perfect; God, the Judge of all, and Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. What a glorious company, and all the more glorious that the prefix "holy" belongs to all their names.

If we could gather together in one grand assembly room all the able divines, philosophers, statesmen, princes and kings of earth, who would not deem himself honored by admission to such an assembly? Yet, what would such an assembly be compared with the one spoken of in our text? How puny the character

and how meager the attainments, and how low the station of the members in comparison with the assembly in heaven, where even the humblest are kings and priests unto God, and shall reign with him forever! And how meager the entertainment in comparison with that which will be furnished in the society above! Well might Baxter write:

"How delightful to have heard Paul and Silas singing in the stocks! How much more to hear them sing praises in heaven! What melody did David make on his harp; but how much more melodious to hear that sweet singer in the heavenly choir! What would I have given for one hour of free converse with Paul when he was just come down from the third heaven! What if I had been in the place of those shepherds who saw

and heard the heavenly host singing glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good-will toward men; but I shall see and hear more glorious things."

But, when John's vision is personally realized, it will be a more glorious scene. "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and

might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Fellow-sinner! this noble army is not yet full. The Lord Jesus Christ, its Captain, still wishes recruits, and, to encourage them to come and enlist, he has announced as the principle by which his selections are governed: "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out;" so that you, too, dear reader, may become a member of that blessed society—wear a white robe, and carry a palm in your hand before the throne. Listen! the voice even now is to you: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

CHAPTER IX.

ITS WORK.

WHILE yet our first parents dwelt in Eden, and before sin had passed its trail over its holy enjoyments, they lived in a state of activity. God made trees, for food and for pleasure, to grow out of the ground; at the same time work was found for man: "He must keep and dress the garden." Gen. ii. 8–25. We are formed for activity, and our highest joys are found in the exercise of the faculties that God has given. A rest from labor is only a negative pleasure—positive joys spring from the proper use of our bodies and our minds. Indeed, indolence is sinful. It is condemned by the Scriptures, and it is there-

fore impossible to conceive that it could furnish happiness. Sin and sorrow are united together by the unchanging laws of God. It therefore follows that heaven is a place of activity. There is there a work for all to do! Hence we have such declarations as the following concerning the dwellers there: "They serve him day and night in his temple;" "They sing the song of Moses and the Lamb;" "They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." What their special work is we can not tell, but we know that one object of the Church on earth is, "That now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, *by the Church*, the manifold wisdom of God." And if the glorious attributes of God are to be shown forth by the Church on earth, it is easy to infer that in its purified and tri-

umphal state in heaven it may be employed in the same work. Indeed, this may be the meaning of the Apostle's declaration: "And hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." If so, then one of the services in which the redeemed will be engaged will be the exhibiting the glorious character of God as revealed in the plan of redemption.

Another part of their work will be adding to their own stock of knowledge. Even now the bliss of heaven is increased by the increase of its knowledge: "There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth." A message from our little planet concerning penitent

souls sends a wave of joy around the courts of Paradise; and the Savior said, when on earth, to his disciples: "What thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter." Then, too, it is written: "Here we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." Yes, our knowledge will be increased in the home above, and, in accordance with the law of our nature, its increase will be gradual. Day by day we will make progress. Here, in this sin-stricken earth, we dwell in ignorance; there floods of light and knowledge will be reflected upon us from the throne of God, so that we can say, in a higher sense than the Psalmist: "In thy light shall we see light clearly." Nor will our increased and increasing knowledge be distorted, as is often the case here, to teach unworthy views of God

and his redeeming grace, but, on the contrary, it will tend to make our notes of praise sweeter and clearer when we sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Ignorance is one of the penalties of sin. We are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But being free from sin we will make progress in divine knowledge surpassing anything of which we have experience on earth. We will be no longer babes, having need of milk, but we will be able to comprehend many of the mysteries which have perplexed

the wisest minds on earth, and with the increase of our knowledge our joy will abound.

But not only will the saints exhibit the glorious character of God "to principalities and powers in heavenly places," and devote themselves to an increase of knowledge; they will also celebrate the victories in which they were engaged on earth. Earth and the triumphs of the Redeemer will not be forgotten in the dwelling-place above — accordingly, we read that John, in vision, saw around the throne, and before the Lamb, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and they cried with a loud voice, saying: "Salvation unto our Lord, which sitteth upon the throne;

and unto the Lamb." These are the memorial banners which bring back to mind our warfare and the Savior's glorious triumph on earth. The song was first begun by Abel and is well described in the words:

"Ten thousand times ten thousand sung
Loud anthems round the throne,
When lo! one solitary tongue
Began a song unknown—
A song unknown to angel ears,
A song that told of banished fears,
Of pardoned sins and dried-up tears.

"Not one of all the heavenly host
Could those high notes attain;
But spirits from a distant coast
United in the strain;
Till he who first began the song
(To sing alone not suffered long)
Was mingled with a countless throng.

"And still, as hours are fleeting by,
The angels ever bear
Some newly ransomed soul on high,
To join the chorus there.

And so the song will louder grow
Till all whom Christ redeemed below
To meet the Lord in triumph go."

Yes, the past will be remembered, and all the sweeter will our enjoyments be when we recall the tribulation through which we entered the kingdom. Here we often weary, if not of our work, at least in our work, and we sigh for rest; but the work above is a rest itself—so congenial to our nature, so divested of the elements which constituted the penalty of sin, that it becomes an enjoyment, and we can "serve *day and night*," and never be weary. So that we can say, concerning the employments of heaven, as well as of its joys: "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart to conceive what God hath laid up for those who love him."

Fellow-sinner, would you not desire to engage in such pleasant work? Have you no desire to exhibit the glorious character of God in the ages to come? No wish to make new discoveries of the grace, and truth, and glory of the God who gave Jesus? No aspiration after a place among that company who carry the banners and sing the song of the Lamb, and who are led by him "to living fountains of waters?" We trust you have these desires and aspirations, and we want to whisper in your ear the words of the Savior himself: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed;" for with this gold and this raiment you will be accepted a member of this blessed company, and heir of this glorious inheritance.

CHAPTER X.

ITS HEALTHFULNESS.

"The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Isa. xxxiii. 24.

THE prophet's description of a sinful nation—a people laden with iniquity—is a true one: "From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." Ah! it is true sin and sickness and death are united together by a law of God. Hence, in this sin-stricken world, sickness and death are the portion of all its inhabitants. Every inhabitant, with more or less frequency, is heard to declare, "I am sick." But there is a land free from the blight of sin; it is the land to which I am heir,

a joint-heir with Christ. There is my inheritance, and "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Here I have often been sick, and, as a consequence, "weary, worn and sad;" and if not sick from the miasma which sin produces, I have been homesick for my Father's house above. And others have a like experience; for sickness is not congenial to our nature—it is the penalty of sin, and it presses heavy on its subjects.

Frequently have we heard the expressions, "Now property is cheap, but I would not settle in that neighborhood, it is so sickly." "I never knew the value of health until laid on this bed of sickness. If I ever recover, how carefully shall I watch over my health!" And we know that many fortunes have been spent seeking health. This climate and that

climate have been tried, and this medicine and that, and often without avail; day by day the weary patient sinks, and finally the cold hand of death snatches away the cherished life. Surrounded by such scenes of suffering and sorrow, how sweet to think there is a land where no sickness ever enters! Yes, it is—

> "Sweet, in the confidence of faith,
> To view the land above—
> The land where sickness is unknown,
> And all is health and love."

And so universal is sickness in this sin-stricken world, that even the loved ones of the Savior are not exempted from it. In every age and country there are Marys and Marthas that can say, as well as the sisters of Bethany, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." And, worse still, our moral is just as truly sick

as our physical nature. Around us and in our bodies there is every form of sickness and suffering. Within us there is that body of death, which presses so heavily upon us that it often paralyzes us, and leaves us in despair to cry out, as did the Apostle Paul, "Who shall deliver me?" And we are so sick that there is only one Physician who can cure us—only one antidote that can restore us. It is "the blood of the Crucified One." But in the land of health above all are cured—all know from experience the meaning of our text, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick."

Reader, do you not desire a dwelling-place in this healthy abode? You know there is no enjoyment without health, and here is the only place where it is truly found. Surely, your response will be:

"Yes, above everything else, I covet a habitation in that blissful, healthful home." If so, let me whisper in your ear, "The people that dwell therein have been forgiven their iniquity." Get your sins washed away in Jesus' blood, and you shall be a dweller there. All forgiven ones are made heirs of this glorious inheritance.

CHAPTER XI.

ITS PERPETUITY.

"They shall reign forever and ever." Rev. xxii. 5.

OFTENTIMES have we heard the remark concerning the condition of the more fortunate of earth's inhabitants: "It is too good to last long." "Such happiness can not be long continued in a world of change like this." And how true are these expressions! "Change and decay" are, indeed, written on everything pertaining to earth. Not only do pilgrims Zionward declare: "Here we have no continuing city;" but those who claim this as their home are obliged to confess that here "there is no abiding place." But in the home beyond, which

I claim for my inheritance, there is no decay. Possessions are all held in perpetuity, and their possessors shall "reign forever and ever."

Rutherford was accustomed to say: "Till you be in heaven, it will be foul weather — one shower up and another shower down;" *i. e.*, darkness and change can be read on all things below! But what matters it? There is a city that hath foundations so surely laid that they will endure forever. There is a kingdom so large and so abiding, that it can truly be said: Her kings and priests "shall reign forever and ever." And if the reason is asked, we reply: "The causes of change and decay are not found there." Here kings and emperors reign but very short periods. Death comes and robs them of their crown! Revolu-

tions are inaugurated and governments changed, and the possessors of crowns often driven into exile, and it is all produced by the upheavals of the volcano sin! Here, too, in consequence of sin's curse, the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain (Rom. viii. 22), until the deliverance comes, viz: the destruction of the work of the devil by the Lord Jesus Christ. But in heaven there are no traces of this wasting, corroding thing—all is holiness to the Lord; and, therefore, perpetuity is written upon all its possessions and institutions, aye, and upon all its inhabitants. Hence, they shall enjoy its honors and do its work "forever and ever."

Dear reader, do you not desire an interest in this abiding inheritance? You know how it is with earthly possessions

—"they take wings and fly away;" and it ever will be so, for we are here in a state of probation—here to prepare for another and a better world; but if we fail to obtain this preparation, then we pass to a world of unspeakable, unchangeable despair.

On the other hand, secure through the blessed Savior an interest in this glorious inheritance, and when you see the much-coveted possessions of earth passing from your grasp, you can in triumph exclaim: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. v. 1.

CHAPTER XII.

ITS GLORY.

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." Ps. lxxiii. 24.

YES, glorious things have been spoken of the City of God, and as an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ, I shall dwell in one of its glorious mansions, and be able to say of its exceeding glory: "It is my inheritance, for my Father owns it all." True, I do not claim to be worthy of such a dwelling-place, nor of such a position as every son of God will occupy in that blessed land; but I know that it is true that my Father will "guide me by his counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

But what shall I say of the glory of

this inheritance, that I may recommend it to my fellow-men? Paul saw more of its glory than any other man; yet all he could say of it was: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Yet the time is coming when my eye, yes, and your eye, fellow-traveler to eternity, if an heir of God, will see those glorious things which your heart can not now conceive, nor the tongue describe.

We can not fully understand the description we here have of heavenly glory, and yet the half has not been told. Just think of it! A glorious city, with gates of pearl, walls of precious stones, and streets of gold—figures, doubtless—but if they mean anything at all, it is that

the New Jerusalem above is indeed a city far more glorious than anything ever conceived of by man. Nor is this all—it is a city nightless, sorrowless and sinless, and without a temple; for "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

Yes, there is no night there, nor weary limbs calling for rest, and no devotees of Mammon ready with the morning light to urge to weary toil. No sorrow, for God himself has wiped the tears from the eyes of every dweller there, so that they will never flow again; but, better still, no sin there to blight and blast the hopes, steal away the enjoyment of its subjects, and alienate from the love and favor of God; but, on the contrary, its inhabitants are all pure in heart, see God, and enjoy sweet communion with him.

Hence, it is written: "The glory of God did light it, and the Lamb is the light thereof;" and, "In thy presence is fullness of joy."

Dear reader, do you not desire a place in this glorious city? Surely, its glory is worth seeking after. The hope of it has cheered the hearts of many weary travelers as they passed on their journey here below. David sang: "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever;" and so may you. Walk no longer on the broad way which ends in darkness and death; escape to the narrow way which ends in that glorious place which we have just been describing, where beauty, stability, happiness, rest, enjoyment, peace, holiness, healthfulness, perpetuity and glory, all

are found. The Savior who led me thus far, "all along my pilgrim way," waits to lead you. Listen to his voice: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

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